

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 168

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Ballentine Place Historic District is significant as a planned suburb of Norfolk, Virginia. The growth of this historic community is tied to the arrival of the commuter railroads in Norfolk during the early 20th century, coupled with the booming housing needs of naval workers in the years leading up to World Wars I and II. The Ballentine Place subdivision, located to the northeast of the city proper, was developed in 1909 by the Ballentine Realty Corporation on the farm property historically associated with Thomas R. Ballentine, one of Norfolk's more prominent citizens. In contrast to many of the neighboring residential communities platted around the turn of the 20th century, Ballentine Place was laid out as a grid-system with small lots meant to appeal to the city's working class. Instead of a relentless grid, however, Ballentine Place consisted of a series of long and narrow blocks punctuated at the center by a large, open park. The open space was landscaped as a federally-funded Works Progress Administration (WPA) project circa 1935 and was combined with the neighboring Ballentine School property. Architecturally, the community features a number of early- to mid 20th-century buildings that reflect the fashionable styles and building forms of the period, including the Queen Anne, Bungalow/Craftsman, Cape Cod, Colonial Revival, and the American Foursquare. Civic, religious, and educational structures, as well as low-rise commercial buildings, and a landscaped park support the approximately 145-acre neighborhood, defined by landscaped streets and early-to-mid 20th century dwellings, many supported by freestanding garages.

Eligible under the National Register of Historic Places criteria A and C, the Ballentine Place Historic District is significant for the themes of architecture and community planning/development, coupled with landscape architecture and politics/government for the Depression-era WPA projects. The period of significance for the Ballentine Place Historic District extends from the construction of the earliest extant dwelling in 1900 to the construction of the present Trinity Baptist Church in 1953. The area making up the Ballentine Place Historic District consists of 649 properties, including 616 single dwellings, 26 multiple dwellings, four churches, a school, a central landscaped park with a monument and pond, and one commercial

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 169

building. Additionally, there are 466 supporting outbuildings and secondary resources, including 164 sheds, 286 garages, two guesthouses, nine carports, a monument, pond, and four barbecues. There are 861 contributing resources and 257 non-contributing resources, resulting in 1,118 total resources in Ballentine Place.

Criterion A: That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Significant as a planned suburban community, Ballentine Place represents the attraction of the middle- and working-class populations to planned suburban communities with the arrival of the commuter rail lines. By 1900, the streetcar line began to allow easy access to downtown Norfolk from outlying areas, essentially opening vast areas to suburban development by the first decade of the 20th century. Much of the city's residential building boom during the period leading up to and between the World Wars, encompassed and expanded numerous neighborhoods that had been platted around the turn of the 20th century, among them Ghent, Riverview, Lafayette Residence Park, Winona, Colonial Place, Chesterfield Heights, and Ballentine Place. Such communities offered residents a scenic alternative to the older, more dense inner city neighborhoods. Many of the communities were laid out and specifically advertised to attract upper-income residents with strict building requirements, extensive amenities, attractive landscaping and generously sized lots, often along the cities numerous scenic waterfronts. However, the majority of the development companies' ambitious dreams of a restrictive upper-class neighborhood never completely materialized, in part due to the intense competition of the numerous neighboring suburban developments. In contrast to the aims of these development companies, the Ballentine Realty Corporation specifically catered to the growing needs of the middle and working class, creating one of the few suburban communities that all could afford.

Planned development in the area that became Ballentine Place began in 1909 under the Ballentine Realty Corporation, which subdivided the land previously known as the Ballentine Farm.¹ With the annexation of large tracts of suburban land into the City of Norfolk in 1923 and the increasing acceptance of the automobile with efficient vehicular routes to the city, Ballentine Place became firmly established as a working class commuting suburb by 1950. Today,

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 170

Ballentine Place retains its working-class heritage as a firmly established mixed-race neighborhood, primarily composed of an African-American population.

The neighborhood's central landscaped park, representing a community town green space ideal, also exemplifies the lasting effects of the landscape projects initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Depression-era Works Progress Administration, a successful government program aimed at keeping the employment level high during the height of an economic decline.

Criteria C: That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

The suburban neighborhood of Ballentine Place meets Criterion C of the National Register of Historic Places for its substantial concentration of domestic architecture, representing the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman styles that were popular throughout America during the first half of the 20th century. Ballentine Place retains many of its original early-20th-century residential revival and American-movement buildings, the majority of which were designed by local builders or architects. The earliest houses erected, circa 1900, were generally the more imposing Colonial Revival- and Queen Anne-style residences, located along Cape Henry Avenue in the southern portion of the neighborhood for middle- and working class residents. These large single dwellings were sited on spacious lots with landscaped yards. Each of buildings exhibited more high-style ornamentation, including wrap-around porches, bracketing, denticulated moldings, side wings, rear ells, and an array of detailed cladding materials.

By the time residential construction began to take off in the late 1920s, house sizes and stylistic features had begun to change in response to a new clientele, a trend typical of suburban neighborhoods throughout Norfolk. Larger numbers of smaller, less ornamented houses were built throughout the neighborhood. The dominant styles were modest Colonial Revival dwellings balanced by a significant number of Craftsman-style Bungalows. These later dwellings were home to more working-class residents, and exhibited less architectural ornament than the houses erected prior to 1915.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 171

Therefore, the suburban neighborhood of Ballentine Place meets Criterion C of the National Register of Historic Places for its early concentration of high style and, as the market demanded, more modest suburban architecture.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The City of Norfolk

Created from Norfolk County in 1682, the City of Norfolk is located along the eastern seaboard in Tidewater, Virginia. It is bounded to the east by the City of Virginia Beach, the cities of Chesapeake and Portsmouth to the south and west, respectively, and to the north by the Elizabeth River and the Chesapeake Bay. Originally a borough, Norfolk achieved city status in 1845 with a total land area that encompassed 1.3 square miles.

A significant period of growth in the city began during the French and Indian War (1754-1763), when the population grew from 1,000 to 6,000 by the time of the American Revolution (1775-1783). Norfolk emerged slowly as streets became lined with elegantly styled Federal townhouses. With the hostilities between France and England beginning in 1793, Norfolk resumed a role as an important seaport, prospering through the supply of ships for both countries. This significant role, interrupted numerous times throughout the 19th century, became stabilized after the Civil War (1861-1865). The City of Norfolk grew into a major port of trade with cotton, corn, flour, peanuts, tobacco, wheat, timber, and coal becoming its main exports. Long-time area merchants and newcomers to the city re-opened Norfolk to the cotton trade, making it one of the two largest cotton ports in the nation during the Reconstruction and Growth Period (1865-1917). Additionally, lumber and shingle mills, along with other commercial and industrial ventures, ensured the area's continued stability and encouraged the physical and residential growth of the city northward from the commercial core along West Freemason Street.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 172

Along with the post-Civil War economic growth came an increasing population and expanding city boundaries. In the period between 1870 and 1914, Norfolk saw substantial changes in its residential character, growing from a small urban, port town to an expanding city with many outlying suburban communities. This suburban growth, induced in part by the electric streetcar established in 1894, occurred in phases beginning after Reconstruction and continuing well into the mid-20th century.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Norfolk underwent five significant boundary expansions, in 1887, 1890, 1902, 1906, and 1911, increasing the city's area from 1.3 to nine square miles. The first boundary expansion to occur since 1845 was in 1887, when the city annexed Brambleton, a residential community separated from Norfolk by Newton's Creek. The acquisition of Brambleton increased the city's population and encouraged future city annexations. In 1890, Atlantic City was added, which, unlike the established residential community of Brambleton, was primarily undeveloped land that attracted developers wishing to improve housing for the growing population.

The expansion of Norfolk during the late 19th century mirrored that of many cities throughout the country, as the development of the streetcar became synonymous with the expansion of city boundaries and suburban growth. The electric streetcars that had replaced the original horse-drawn cars enabled the suburban development to extend farther and farther outside the city in accordance with the greater speed afforded by the electric cars. Major players in these expanding suburbs were often real estate development companies that laid out and advertised "planned" residential neighborhoods on the outskirts of major cities. The earliest of these outlying planned communities, such as Llewellyn Park in New Jersey (laid out in 1855), were firmly established upper-class neighborhoods. Yet, with the growth of electric streetcar systems in the 1880s and 1890s, greater numbers of middle-class subdivisions began to ring American cities.

In Norfolk, this transformation first began in 1866, when the first street railway franchise was granted to the Norfolk City Railroad Company. In 1869, the company had laid the first tracks along Main Street, later to be extended along Church and Granby Streets reaching the residential areas north of the city. By 1894, the most desirable areas for development were those located

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 173

along the rapidly expanding electric streetcar lines, which replaced the original horse-drawn lines of the 1860s. Expansion of the city spurred by this modern form of transportation occurred primarily after the turn of the 20th century with the annexation of numerous tracts of platted land: Park Place (VDHR 122-5087), which included an 1890s suburb of the same name north of the city, was annexed in 1902; the port town of Berkley (VDHR 122-0824) in 1906; and, in 1911, the unimproved tract of Lambert's Point and the small community of Huntersville.

Norfolk investors, encouraged by the rapidly expanding transportation system, underwrote dozens of suburban improvement companies during this period. In 1890 alone, fifty-eight land and improvement companies were chartered in Norfolk. The first, and most significant residential development in Norfolk of this period, was the city's first planned suburb of Ghent (VDHR 122-0061). Originally a 220-acre tract of mostly rural land, Ghent was subdivided in 1890 by the newly established Norfolk Company and developed with freestanding, single-family dwellings that appealed to middle- and upper-middle-income residents. Following the development of Ghent, several suburban residential communities began to take shape, including Riverview (1900, VDHR 122-0823), Lafayette Residence Park (1902, VDHR 122-0826), Colonial Place (1904, VDHR 122-0825), Winona (1909, VDHR 122-0828), and Ballentine Place (1909, VDHR 122-0829).

The explosion of suburban real estate interests and a limited clientele caused stiff competition among the various suburbs. Thus, the expansion of many of these suburban neighborhoods was limited during the early 1900s through the 1910s. During World War I (1914-1918), Norfolk's location and prosperous industries made the port city an obvious center for military and civilian production. The expansion of wartime industry in the World War I to World War II Period (1914-1945) greatly impacted the city's suburban development as an influx of workers swelled the city's population, creating a demand for housing that led to the rapid development of many of the suburbs platted in the early years of the 20th century.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 174

Physical Make-up of Suburban Norfolk

Most of Norfolk's late-19th and early-20th-century suburban developments shared common design features. Many were laid out with a grid-like street system combined with semi-circular roads or crescents designed to take full advantage of scenic waterfront tracts. Each neighborhood featured landscaped streets with medium-sized dwellings houses surrounded by modest yards. Primarily designed by architects from Baltimore and Norfolk, suburban house forms were repeated throughout the residential neighborhoods, making streetscapes in one subdivision almost indistinguishable from the next.

The size and character of Norfolk's turn-of-the-20th-century domestic architecture reflected the influence of nationwide trends in middle-class family and the declining availability of domestic servants. For this reason, houses in the earliest suburbs such as Ghent and Park Place differed markedly in size and elaboration from those in the later, farther-out neighborhoods, such as Colonial Place, Riverview Park, Chesterfield Heights, and Ballentine Place.

In general, the residential architecture of the turn of the 20th century and soon thereafter in Norfolk consisted of late-Victorian Queen Anne-style dwellings, the American foursquare form, and the bungalow, commonly ornamented with Craftsman-style detailing. Colonial Revival-style dwellings, influenced by the architecture of the 1907 Jamestown Exposition in Norfolk, were also prevalent in many of Norfolk's early suburbs. In addition to influencing the residential architectural styles, the Jamestown Exposition also encouraged the construction of a new building type in Norfolk: the apartment house. Built to accommodate the influx of visitors and workers for the Exposition, many of these apartment buildings went up in established suburban neighborhoods serviced by the electric streetcar lines.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 175

The Ballentine Place Tract Prior to Suburban Development: 1867-1908

Prior to subdivision as a planned residential suburban neighborhood, the land along the terminus of the Lafayette River on which Ballentine Place would be established was largely undeveloped, consisting of the rural plantation and truck farm of prominent Norfolk citizen and philanthropist, Thomas R. Ballentine.

Thomas Ballentine, born in 1820, hailed from a rural farm in Currituck County, North Carolina. Arriving in Norfolk in 1849, Ballentine, who was trained early as a mechanic, purchased a farm eighteen miles from downtown. By 1853, he was among five people noted for the “best conducted farm” at an agricultural fair.² In 1855, he sold the original farm and spent the next two years working as an agent for the Norfolk County Ferries. Ballentine then purchased a farm at Hickory Ground, where he resided for the next three years. He then purchased another nearby farm, which he used as a rental property. By 1867, he purchased the future Ballentine Place tract. The trend of judiciously buying area farms that had been ruined by mismanagement, returning them to working order, and selling them for a hefty profit, resulted in Ballentine’s success as a Norfolk businessman.

During the Civil War, Ballentine joined the Norfolk County Rifle patriots, Company F, 41 Virginia Regiment. Following the war, he chose to remain in Norfolk, where he owned substantial farmland, rather than return to his family and farm in North Carolina. During the Reconstruction era, Ballentine’s keen business sense earned him the elected position of Norfolk City Councilman. Eventually, Ballentine’s farm, which took advantage of the rich, sandy loam soils of the area, became the largest truck farm in the county, shipping produce to markets all along the East Coast.

In 1894, in memory of his wife, Mary F. Hughes, who died the previous year, he built and endowed the Mary F. Ballentine Home for the Aged (VDHR 122-0101), a large masonry Romanesque Revival-style building located nearby at 927 Park Avenue in Brambleton. The charitable organization, of which he was president, served the community for numerous years in its original capacity, and was later converted into the Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the YWCA

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 176

(1954-1974) and later converted to Wheatley Hall for dormitory use by Norfolk State University (1982-1983). However, the Ballentine legacy endures at The Ballentine, an Episcopal-church affiliated retirement facility located at 7211 Granby Street. Among Ballentine's other notable contributions to the city were the downtown Ballentine Building and the Arcade Market. He also served as the director of the Norfolk National Bank and the Norfolk Bank for Savings and Trusts, as well as an investor in the old Exchange Bank.

Ballentine's property remained farmland until 1909, when it was platted as Ballentine Place. The suburban development of this area of Norfolk, east of the city's central core, was located within the boundaries of Norfolk County until annexed by the city in 1923.³ According to historic bird's eye views from 1892, this property appears to have been primarily utilized as pastures and light agricultural farmland and contained only a handful of farmhouses.⁴ The 1900 federal census for the Tanner's Creek District of Norfolk states that most of the residents of the area were of Caucasian descent, primarily from Virginia and North Carolina. The vast majority of these residents were laborers, many renting their property from merchants. The household size ranged from one to seven persons in over fifty households. The census is not specific enough to pinpoint exact statistical information for the tract that would soon be platted as Ballentine Place, as the Tanner's Creek district included vast acreage of not yet annexed land.⁵

A significant impetus to suburban growth occurred with one of the first projects undertaken jointly by the New Norfolk Company and the Norfolk Railway & Light Company. The company aimed to attract residents to outlying areas of Norfolk with the extension of the streetcar lines. The streetcar line made the suburbs easily accessible to downtown Norfolk. Prospects for suburban development brightened with the establishment of the streetcar line, and communities such as Ballentine Place began to take shape. By the time the suburb was platted, there were approximately seven dwellings located in Ballentine Place.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 177

The Initial Development of Ballentine Place: 1909-1914

Ballentine Place was platted in 1909 as the “Ballentine Place Suburb of Norfolk, ” by the Ballentine Realty Corporation, under the direction of company president J.W. Halstead. The plan utilized fifty-seven blocks extending north from the Princess Anne Toll Road and ten blocks extending south. The proposed plat depicted the neighborhood’s original lot divisions, street layout, and central open space. The new subdivision was composed of a regular grid plan, with narrow lots. Advertisements, which offered houses for sale beginning in 1909, stated that Ballentine Place was, “lying high and dry, with perfect drainage into Tanner’s Creek, which skirts one side, and no farther from the heart of the business of Norfolk than is City Park to the left, no more advantageous piece of property could be found around Norfolk for the ideal location of the moderate priced home.”⁶ The advertisement also touted that Ballentine Place was a “suburb of natural beauty and wonderful growth” on land that “has for a number of years had more than a local reputation as being one of the most productive in the United States.”⁷ Advertisements on the same day included the “advantages” of living in Ballentine Place, including that “it is the only tract of land on which a person can stand and take a car directly to the business center of Norfolk by two electric routes, with five-cent fare, and also take a car to Ocean View, Old Point, the Exposition grounds, Pine Beach and the Virginian Railway terminals, or to Cape Henry and Virginia Beach.”⁸ The numerous advertisements boast that buying the lots for sale in Ballentine Place would teach your children “to save their money and buy real estate. It may prevent them from being homeless in their old age.”⁹ The lots were offered at the low prices of \$150 to \$250 and corner lots at \$275, with the terms of one dollar down and one dollar per week, or five dollars down and five dollars per month. The Ballentine Realty Company, claiming to be developing one of Norfolk’s most beautiful suburbs, providing “many six, seven, eight and nine room houses.... Some are of solid brick, with slate roofs. Some first story brick, and second story shingles. Streets are being graded and sidewalks laid. Much of this work is being done by the teams and labor that is employed part of the year on the farm work. This largely accounts for the price of the lots. Much of the building material was bought at very low figures during the panic year prices.”¹⁰ Other amenities in the neighborhood that were advertised from the community’s inception included the streetcar service, and the mains of

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 178

both the Norfolk County Water Company and the City Water Works, as well as the “property adjoining and beyond this has been sold to, and is being built up by white people only.”¹¹

The first planned phase of construction in Ballentine Place began as early as 1909 and continued through 1915. This initial development coincided with the building boom between 1907 and 1908 experienced by the City of Norfolk. Many prominent suburbs reveled in the increased development. However, this citywide period of prosperity was quickly followed by a slump in housing construction between 1909 and 1910, as Ballentine Place was still attempting to establish itself as the one of the city’s leading suburbs.

The boundaries of Ballentine Place were slightly altered from the original plat when the subdivision was actually developed. The use of Princess Anne Road as a major transportation corridor, originally designated as a toll road, prompted the seventeen small blocks south of Cape Henry Avenue to and across Princess Anne Road to be disassociated with the neighborhood, putting a buffer between Ballentine Place and Princess Anne Road.

The majority of the buildings constructed during the initial building phase of Ballentine Place were typical of domestic construction throughout the nation and were influenced by the forms, materials, details, or other features associated with the architectural styles that were currently in vogue. In this manner, the original plan and design of buildings in Ballentine Place followed a more high-style pattern, with the majority of the dwellings exhibiting the Colonial Revival and Queen Anne styles. Additionally, more vernacular and suburban interpretations of the popular styles are visible as well. As these new architectural trends were spread from the cities to the suburbs, and later to the rural communities, the styles were modified to accommodate smaller resources, utilizing varied materials that typically reduced construction costs, as evidenced in such suburban neighborhoods as Ballentine Place.

Real estate development firms throughout the city attempted to attract residents and halt the building depression by publishing full-page advertisements in local newspapers between 1910 and 1917. Despite these efforts, the plans for the establishment of a residential suburb on the tract were slow to form, in part due to the fierce suburban tract competition and the continued building slump. The 1910 census, taken just after the establishment of Ballentine Place,

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 179

designated the area as a portion of the Tanner's Creek District. The ethnic make-up is exclusively Caucasian, consisting primarily of laborers.¹²

Subsequent Development in Ballentine Place: 1915-1953

As Norfolk expanded over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, the city appropriated surrounding unincorporated land, thereby, reducing the size of Norfolk County. Ballentine Place remained within the boundaries of Norfolk County until 1923, when a large twenty-five square mile tract of platted land was annexed to the growing city. Most of the tract lay north of the Lafayette River, and included the suburbs of Winona, Lafayette Residence Park, Edgewater, Larchmont, Titustown, Meadowbrook, Lochaven, Ocean View, Willoughby, Lenox, Fairmount Park, Riverview, Chesterfield Heights, Newton Park, Campostella, and Ballentine Place.¹³ This annexation increased the city's population from an estimated 31,000 to nearly 150,000, and nearly quadrupled the land size. The move to annex was spurred by a desire to portray Norfolk as a progressive city, and the need to acquire a larger tax base. In turn, the city began a program aimed at upgrading the newly acquired suburbs with fire protection services and schools.

Located at 2415 Ballentine Boulevard, the Ballentine School, designed in the Classical Revival style by architect J.W. Lee with the Seay Brothers as contractors, was constructed between 1915-1916 to meet the growing population of Norfolk County. Constructed on a portion of the central open space along Ballentine Boulevard, the public school, which provided education for grades one to six, was one of only eleven public schools in Norfolk by the 1920s. The school served the community as an elementary school until 1980, when it was converted to a special needs educational center.

A sampling of the federal census of 1920 reveals that the majority of the families living in Ballentine Place were native Virginians, or had moved from nearby states such as North Carolina, South Carolina, and Maryland, though a handful were from other states, including New York and Illinois, and even England. Household sizes ranged from one to eleven persons.¹⁴ Many of the larger households in the suburban neighborhood included several boarders, an

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 180

outgrowth of the World War I housing demand. Many of the residents of Ballentine Place by 1923 were solidly middle and working class. The occupations noted in the city directory indicated that the neighborhood was home to a preponderance of business managers, salesmen, and laborers. These include D.W. Davis (1929 Vincent Avenue, poultry worker); P.B. Clowes (1948 Vincent Avenue, painter); W.N. and Miss M.A. Kirkland (1927 Ballentine Boulevard, district manager *Norfolk Times-Dispatch* and schoolteacher); A.R. Holland (1946 Ballentine Boulevard, painter), R.O. Tate (3010 McLemore Street, real estate); W.E. Deford (2914 McLemore Street, no occupation listed); George Burgess (3002 Tait Terrace, carpenter); J.V. McVey (2814 Cape Henry Avenue, laundry); and G.I. Hardy (3206 Cape Henry Avenue, electrician), among numerous others. The 1930 directories included Jason F. Gardner (2444 Ballentine Boulevard, Gardner's Inc.); Ossie O. Culpepper (2514 Ballentine Boulevard, foreman); John E. Hamilton (2702 Ballentine Boulevard, fireman); Quinton T. Aydlett (2709 Ballentine Boulevard, salesman); Joseph R. Carter (3026 Ballentine Boulevard, manager D.P. Stores); William O. Mitchell (3015 Ballentine Boulevard, insurance agent); Mrs. Sadie E. Dowe (3122 Cape Henry Avenue, stenographer); Lindsay Cornelison (2848 Cromwell Road, carpenter); Willie W. Toxey (1515 Grandy Avenue, captain CFD); George W. Parker (3021 Grandy Avenue, electrician); Jason F. Stringer (2648 McKann Avenue, checker); Edward Townsend (2755 McKann Avenue, student); John N. Lassiter (2215 Cape Henry Avenue, salesman); Coburn Smith (2615 Vincent Avenue, carpenter); and Edward J. Wilkinson (2841 Vincent Avenue, car repair), among numerous others. Similar findings were revealed in the 1940 directories, which included E. Worth Winslow (3011 Ballentine Boulevard, Winslow's Market); Anne Shearer (2650 Ballentine Boulevard, clerk, Sears Roebuck); Houston L. Wilson (2717 Cromwell Road, Central Radio Company); C.A. Glanville (1708 Cromwell Road, boilermaker); Walter F. Fentress (3036 Grandy Avenue, policeman); George O. Tise (2642 McKann Avenue, bricklayer); and Gilbert R. Connock (2301 Vincent Avenue, checker, Britcherd Dairy).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps reveal that there were approximately eighty-five buildings standing on the original platted lots by 1921. The vigorous building boom of the 1920s is documented on the 1928 Sanborn maps, which depict approximately 350 buildings in Ballentine Place. Ballentine Place continued to grow with the construction of housing, almost wholly constructed in the Colonial Revival and Craftsman/Bungalow styles and forms, or similar

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 181

vernacular interpretations, on unimproved lots laid out in the early part of the 20th century. Encompassing both single-family and multiple-family housing, the growing neighborhood possessed many modest wood-frame dwellings dating from the second quarter of the 20th century that were stylistically integrated to stand alongside the more imposing dwelling houses constructed prior to 1910. Sanborn maps from 1921 also reveal that the development was scattered throughout the platted area, rather than concentrated in one particular area, as had been the case during the initial development phase.

Churches were present in the community as early as 1908 when the Fairmount Park Baptist Church was erected at 3002 Ballentine Boulevard. In 1924, a Sunday School Building was erected next to the Fairmount Park Baptist Church on Ballentine Boulevard. The complex was renamed Trinity Baptist Church on March 5, 1930 and the present building at 2808 Ballentine Boulevard, designed by architects Rudolph, Cocke and Van Leeuwen, opened for services in September 1953. It is the last building constructed in Ballentine Place that is a contributing element to the historic district. The three other churches in Ballentine Place are located at 2546, 2605, and 2850 Ballentine Boulevard. These churches occupy a commercial building (1930), a single dwelling with additions (1930), and the 1924 Sunday School building.

With the stable military economy and the influx of new defense-industry workers to the port city of Norfolk prior to World War II, Norfolk was not as drastically impacted by the Depression as were many other cities. In addition, a booming coal industry further fueled the economy. The Great Depression still suppressed the vigorous building rate and economic stability that had occurred in Norfolk, though not as profoundly as experienced in other parts of the nation.

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) contributed landscaping to the Ballentine Place neighborhood. The WPA, developed under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1933 New Deal Program, was one of the economic stimulus projects designed to "pick America back up on its feet and get the economy moving again" after the Great Depression hit the United States in 1929 and the dollar became virtually worthless and millions of Americans lost their jobs.¹⁵ The WPA was initially designed to fund the building and improvement of America's infrastructure while employing qualified out-of-work Americans. The program was quickly expanded to fund artistic, historical, and cultural efforts as well. The WPA was initiated in 1935 with 4.88 billion

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 182

dollars of funding from the Emergency Relief Fund and during its mere eight-year existence employed over 8.5 million Americans, putting over eleven billion dollars into the economy. The program, organized into regional, state, and local divisions, was responsible paving 651,000 miles of roads, building 78,000 bridges, 8,000 parks, and 800 airports.

The WPA projects in Norfolk were spearheaded by Frederic Heutte (1899-1979), a native of France who served as Norfolk's first Director of Parks and Forestry, hired by the city to develop its parks. Heutte, who described Norfolk as lacking "organized beauty" jointly served as the Superintendent of the WPA projects, as the city used the WPA grant program to fund its beautification efforts.¹⁶ Heutte's legacy included the landscape projects he lead throughout the city. These projects included the planting of live oak trees in Lafayette (City) Park, the landscaping of Ballentine Boulevard with crape myrtles in 1937 after a door-to-door campaign urging residents to beautify their city, the creation of the Municipal Gardens (now Norfolk Botanical Gardens) in 1938, and the establishment of the Norfolk Azalea Gardens. The azalea gardens were envisioned to rival the nationally renowned gardens of Charleston, South Carolina. He employed over 200 African American women, displaced from a WPA sewing project by white women, to labor in these projects. The landscaping of numerous streets, such as Ballentine Boulevard and Granby Street, was born from Heutte's visualization of a landscaped parkway system once the streetcar era had ended. The WPA ran its course soon after Americans returned to work when America entered World War II in 1941. Residential development in Ballentine Place was again sparked after the close of World War II in order to house many war-time workers returning to the local economy, with 145 dwellings constructed between 1945 and 1950.

In Ballentine Place, the WPA constructed Ballentine Park on the neighborhood's central open space.¹⁷ Residents fondly remarked that "almost every conceivable neighborhood activity in Ballentine Place has been held at the school or on its grounds."¹⁸ The WPA was "responsible for the conversion of a swampy marshland into the recreational heart of Ballentine Place...The grounds behind the Ballentine School were little more than a hovel for lizards, mosquitoes and other swampland creatures until the 1930s [when] the WPA, using city materials, drained the swamp and landscaped the entire grounds. The work was accompanied by the paving of Ballentine Boulevard and the planting of crape myrtle trees in the community by the city."¹⁹

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 183

A sampling of City Directories revealed that most of the commercial activity was located just outside the neighborhood boundaries to the north on Lafayette Boulevard. Limited commercial activity, which supported the neighborhood, was scattered along Ballentine Boulevard. In 1923, Barnes Grocery was located at 1731 Ballentine Boulevard, with the Ballentine School and the Ballentine Place Church also along this street. In 1930, the D.P. Stores Company Grocery (1514 Ballentine Boulevard) was located at the southern end of the original neighborhood boundaries at Princess Anne Boulevard. The Ballentine Grocery (2632 Ballentine Boulevard) and the Fairmount Park Sunday School (2848 Ballentine Place) also serviced the neighborhood. By 1930, the Fairmount Park Sunday School had become the Trinity Baptist Church Sunday School and the new commercial activity was located to the northern edges, including the Trainer Service Station (3033 Ballentine Boulevard), the Laird Boat Company (3033 Ballentine Boulevard), and the Fairmount Filling Station (3036 Ballentine Boulevard).²⁰

Final Phase of Development in Ballentine Place (1954-Present)

After the close of World War II, residential and commercial communities began to develop at an increasing rate. As a whole, the country was impacted by the following conditions: an unprecedented rise in automobile use and relative decline of mass transit; the evolution of regional shopping centers; and the presence of defense communities, with a need for additional housing. Ballentine Place followed the national model, and buildings constructed during this housing boom were generally without ornamentation. The lack of detailing and grand form allowed for quick inexpensive construction using readily available materials. This marks a change in the building practices originally established in Ballentine Place.

Infill construction resumed, reaching a highpoint in the 1960s, only to decline over the following decades. Commercial development, encouraged by the automobile, became the most substantial transition to affect many of Norfolk's early suburbs. Cape Henry Avenue serves as the southern boundary of Ballentine Place, screening the majority of the detached residential community from rapidly passing motorists along Princess Anne Avenue. Despite its location near this major transportation route, the neighborhood escaped the effects of encroaching commercial interests

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 184

due to this buffer. Historically, only a small number of locally-owned businesses have occupied space along Ballentine Boulevard. The freedom from commercial intrusion is also largely due to the close proximity of Cromwell Avenue. This thoroughfare also carries much of the north-south traffic and has been commercially encroached upon with a number of establishments, including service stations, stores, and restaurants. Ballentine Place, now located in the center of Norfolk, has the added advantage of easy access to interstates, downtown, and medical, commercial, and cultural areas, despite not being directly affected.

During the 1950s and 1960s, with the growth of Norfolk's suburbs and the decline of the city center, many middle-class inner-city residents began to move to the outlying suburbs. Ballentine Place, by this time, was located near the center of Norfolk, and consequently began to lose some of its middle-class residents. As people moved out, the area became more transient and property values began to fall.

As many Norfolk neighborhoods began to suffer from similar circumstances and fall into disrepair, the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority applied for, and was the first to receive funds from, the 1949 Federal Housing Act aimed at rehabilitating neighborhoods. In order to protect other neighborhoods, housing codes began to establish strict requirements. Accordingly, every room had to contain a window and houses were required to have interior running water. Such measures were taken "to protect older middle-class areas such as Ghent, Riverview, Fairmount Park, Brambleton, and Winona from deterioration."²¹ Similar efforts were attempted in other older suburbs, including Chesterfield Heights and Ballentine Place.

By the mid-1960s, Ballentine Place had begun to experience many of the same social and urban trends affecting older suburbs across America. As newer and more fashionable subdivisions were built farther from the city center, affluent white residents moved out of the older neighborhoods, where many of the large historic houses were divided into multiple dwellings. Additionally, the older suburbs became home to the many African-American families affected by urban renewal projects in the downtown area. From its inception, Ballentine Place was a strictly white neighborhood in which African Americans were specifically excluded. In the 1960s, African-American families broke this social barrier and moved into the neighborhood in the ensuing years. Integration in the area and the development of modest houses targeted at

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 185

upwardly mobile African Americans proceeded quickly.²² By 1975, approximately 35 percent of the population of Ballentine Place was African American. Unlike other suburban communities where white flight succeeded the entry of African Americans, Ballentine Place continued to attract white buyers in the 1960s.

In an attempt to meet the needs of the changing residential make-up of the neighborhood, the Civic League of Ballentine Place was formed in 1973. The new league developed programs and policies to reverse the physical decline of the neighborhood and to publicly promote racial stability and integration. The Civil Rights Act of 1968 gave the Civic League the power to oppose racial prejudice by the real estate community and to move forward in their efforts to improve the physical character of the neighborhood. Racial integration was described as “harmonious. Despite some reported ‘blockbusting’ and panic selling attempts, prices of real estate did not fall.”²³ Additionally, residents fought to keep a racial balance in their neighborhood and to keep it “a nice place to live—keep the neighborhood stable and keep it looking well.”²⁴ Residents in 1975 commented that “optimism abounds” and that “the black people who are moving in are here to stay. They are making roots. We have a good class of black people, and we have a good class of white people” and that “the people who wanted to flee, fled, and the people who are still here are deeply rooted and here to stay.”²⁵

Following the initiation of urban renewal in Norfolk, interest in revitalizing the city’s close-in neighborhoods blossomed. An influx of funds and local interest in the neighborhood spurred resurgence in the community. The active Civic League, led by the desire to “keep today’s Ballentine Place as desirable as it must have been 60 years ago,” successfully began a maintenance program to make sure streets were repaired and fought the invasion of unwanted commercialism, including a slaughterhouse and a gas station, as well as the issuance of permits for beer licenses and a large apartment complex.²⁶ A twenty-seven-block area was inspected by the Division of Environmental Protection in 1975 to select 70-100 of the worst structures and put them on notice for improvement. By 1978, it was stated that “the old-timey feeling evoked by barbershop quartets and Sundays in the park lives on in Ballentine Place.”²⁷

The Civic League’s efforts gained further support in 1987, when the City of Norfolk named Ballentine Place a Conservation District of the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 186

This allowed property owners to receive low-interest loans and grants for rehabilitation and renovation to existing houses. Neighborhood residents cheered that their neighborhood would be returned to “one of Norfolk’s prettiest” as the program is “one of the best things that can happen to a neighborhood. It’s like getting new clothes. Your self-esteem is better.”²⁸ This was one of the many actions that increased the stability of the neighborhood and the confidence of house buyers. To further insure the neighborhood context of Ballentine Place, the Norfolk City Council changed the zoning from a two-family residential district to a one-family residential district. The change, called downzoning, meant that caps were put on the number of multiple-family units and rental housing in the neighborhood between Vincent and Cromwell Avenues.

Today, the community of Ballentine Place appears closely as it was originally envisioned by the development company that platted the marshy tract at the turn of the 20th century. It stands as a quiet residential community conveniently located near the city’s center. Much of the original well-landscaped design remains intact, including the central, open green space. Many of the community’s streets are lined with trees and lit with black lamp posts, while the landscaped park beckons residents to enjoy the peace and tranquility. Additionally, the civic-minded Garden Club erected a memorial monument to World War II soldiers in Ballentine Place, marking the landscaped Ballentine Park. The architectural and historic character of the neighborhood is of substantial importance to the residents and to the City as a whole, and is a significant component of the value and quality of the property. Although commercialism is rampant outside the boundaries of the neighborhood, Ballentine Place retains “noises that are mostly from birds, windchimes, and trains. Traffic is kept at a minimum, so that residents are often seen out for a stroll.”²⁹ Enhanced by the establishment of the conservation district, the revitalization was facilitated by the specific housing code standards and zoning requirements guiding preservation of the neighborhood. Ballentine Place survives as a suburban subdivision that grew and adapted to the changing physical, social and cultural environment from its inception in 1909 to the present.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 187

ENDNOTES

¹ Development was begun in Ballentine Place under the Ballentine Realty Corporation in 1909. However, the plat was not officially filed until October 10, 1910.

² William S. Forrest, *Historical and descriptive sketches of Norfolk and vicinity: including Portsmouth and the adjacent counties, during a period of two hundred years; also sketches of Williamsburg, Hampton, Suffolk, Smithfield, and other places, with descriptions of some of the principal objects of interest in eastern Virginia*. Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1853.

³ Norfolk was established in 1691 with the division of what was then known as Upper Norfolk County, formed in 1639.

⁴ *Panorama of Norfolk and Surroundings* 1892. Map Division. Library of Congress.

⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census. The Census of 1900, Norfolk, VA. National Archives.

⁶ Advertisement. *Virginian-Pilot*. February, 12, 1911.

⁷ Advertisement. *Virginian-Pilot*. February, 12, 1911.

⁸ Advertisement, *Virginian-Pilot*, January 3, 1909.

⁹ Advertisement, *Virginian-Pilot*, January 3, 1909.

¹⁰ Advertisement, *Virginian-Pilot*, January 3, 1909

¹¹ Advertisement, *Virginian-Pilot*, January 3, 1909.

¹² U.S. Bureau of the Census. The Census of 1910, Norfolk, VA. National Archives.

¹³ Thomas C. Parramore, *Norfolk: The First Four Centuries* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1994), p. 311.

¹⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census. The Census of 1920, Norfolk, VA. National Archives.

¹⁵ Steve Paul Johnson. "WPA Historical Records Survey." July 28, 1999.

¹⁶ Frederic Heutte, Oral History Interview by James R. Sweeney, Old Dominion University. June 28, 1979.

¹⁷ The original plat calls for a central open space, though the Sanborn Maps show a dwelling on the park property through the 1928-1950 period.

¹⁸ Wayne Woodlief. "Ballentine's Fun Center: WPA Converted Swamp to Lake and Playground." *Ledger-Dispatch and Star*, July 25, 1956.

¹⁹ Wayne Woodlief. "Ballentine's Fun Center: WPA Converted Swamp to Lake and Playground." *Ledger-Dispatch and Star*, July 25, 1956.

²⁰ Hill Directory Company. *Norfolk and Portsmouth Directory*, Norfolk, VA: Hill Directory Company, Inc., 1923-1940.

²¹ Thomas C. Parramore, *Norfolk: The First Four Centuries* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1994), p. 352.

²² Although not overtly advertised for African-American, these houses entered the market at high prices given their

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

BALLENTINE PLACE HISTORIC DISTRICT, NORFOLK, VA (VDHR 122-0829)

Section number 8 **Page** 188

cheap construction, and were therefore rejected by whites that had alternative options. Blacks wishing to leave the inner city for suburbia did not have the privileges of choice afforded by the white population and were compelled to pay more for less.

²³ Richard Cobb, "Tree-lined Ballentine Place Is Reminder of Good Old Days." *Virginian-Pilot*, March 9, 1980.

²⁴ Linda Waller, "People are Making it Work." *Virginian-Pilot*. January 26, 1975.

²⁵ Linda Waller, "People are Making it Work." *Virginian-Pilot*. January 26, 1975.

²⁶ Linda Waller, "People are Making it Work." *Virginian-Pilot*. January 26, 1975.

²⁷ Terri Mulqueeney, "Friendliness, Convenience Strong Points," *Norfolk Compass*, August 3, 1978.

²⁸ Mike Knepler, "Ballentine Place Votes to Seek Housing-Conservation Program." *Norfolk Compass*, March 25, 1987.

²⁹ Debbie O'Dell, "Neighbors Keep Ballentine Attractive." *Virginian-Pilot*. No Date.